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Carnahan: "BP Must Be Held Responsible for Cleaning Up Their Mess"

(WASHINGTON, DC) - Congressman Russ Carnahan (MO-03) urged Congress to take swift action to ensure that BP is held fully responsible for the economic and environmental damage being wreaked by the massive Gulf oil spill, urging his colleagues to pass legislation that would remove arbitrary liability caps.

"Even pre-schoolers know that when you make a mess, it's your responsibility to clean it up," Carnahan said. "We cannot allow the oil companies to pass the buck and avoid their responsibilities simply because they find a loophole they can slip through. It's our job to close that loophole and hold them accountable for the horrific damage they are

doing."

The Oil Pollution Act of 1990 limits the liability of parties responsible for offshore oil spills to cleanup costs plus \$75 million. But with millions of gallons of oil still spilling into the Gulf, the full economic impact of the spill to commercial and recreational fishing, tourism, property values, and other economic sectors has yet to be calculated, with some experts estimating the final cost may be as high as \$37 billion. Carnahan is cosponsoring H.R. 5355, which would eliminate the liability caps, ensuring that BP - not the American taxpayers - are held responsible for all economic damages.

"BP can promise all day long that they will cover all the costs, but the stakes are far too high to just take them at their word," said Carnahan. "How can we possibly set an arbitrary dollar amount on what they should pay when we don't yet know how much it's going to cost?"

Carnahan pointed to the historical precedent of the 1989 Exxon Valdez spill, previously the largest in U.S. history at 11 million gallons - compared to 600,000 to 1.2 million gallons per day leaking in the 6 week-old Deepwater Horizon spill. Exxon spent 19 years fighting an assessment of \$5 billion in damages, even as some fisheries continue to struggle and oil still coats rocks along the Alaskan shoreline more than 2 decades after the spill.

Carnahan also insisted that BP must be responsible for restoring payments being provided by a

refinery-funded emergency trust fund to help with the federal response to the spill. The House of Representatives passed a measure today to allow the U.S. Coast Guard to obtain one or more advances from the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund, which is funded by an 8-cent tax - paid by oil refineries - on each barrel of oil. Under current law, the Coast Guard can only draw up to \$100 million from the fund to finance emergency response efforts after an accident and that money is about to run out. The law also limits the fund payout for a single spill to \$1 billion. The American Jobs and Closing Tax Loopholes Act moving through Congress will raise the fee oil companies pay per barrel and increase the fund payout.

"Right now, it's all hands on deck as work continues to stop this leak," Carnahan said. "But make no mistake: BP must be held responsible for cleaning up their mess."

Yesterday, Carnahan and 48 other Members of Congress sent a letter calling on BP CEO Tony Hayward to suspend advertising campaigns and profit payments to shareholders until it remedies the economic and environmental disaster it caused in the Gulf of Mexico. Press reports indicate that the company has launched a \$50 million television advertisement campaign, along with full-page ads in major newspapers; and BP announced Tuesday morning that it would move forward with an annual \$10 billion dividend payment announced a week after the Deepwater Horizon explosion.

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